

# **SMARTPHONE & POCKET PC MAGAZINE**

**SPECIAL REPORT**

## **How To Choose a Smartphone or Pocket PC**

# How To Choose a Smartphone or PDA

## Touch screen or no touch screen... that is the question

by Hal Goldstein and Dan Hart

**T**he single most noticeable difference between the various Windows Mobile devices is whether they have a touch screen interface or not. This determines how the device is controlled (by tapping on the screen or pressing buttons on the keypad) and the size of the device (touch screen devices tend to have a larger screen). In addition, there are other less significant differences that you need to be aware of before purchasing a Windows Mobile device.

### Pros & Cons: Touch screen vs. non-touch screen

If you don't want integrated phone capability, take a look at Windows Mobile PDAs. If you want a phone-enabled device, you need to first decide whether you want a device with or without a touch screen. Here's a description of the general pros and cons associated with these devices:

#### >> Touch screen devices (referred to as Pocket PCs, Phone Editions, WM 6 Smartphone Professionals)

#### PROS

- Touch screen interface may be easier to use: A touch screen interface allows you to control the device and access features by tapping on the screen with a stylus or your finger. This can be easier and quicker than using a keypad, but it also requires two hands to do it—one to hold the device and the other to tap.
- More powerful and feature-rich: The hardware specs on touch screen devices tend to be more impressive and the Microsoft application suite built into them more feature-rich.
- Thousands of third-party software solutions: Because Windows Mobile touch screen devices have been around since 2001, many more third-party applications have been created for them. This provides you with more opportunities to customize your device.
- Easier to enter text: You can use one of four software-based input panels to enter text: a soft QWERTY keyboard, two character recognition panels that convert hand-written characters into text, and Transcriber, a handwriting recognition program that translates print, cursive, or mixed-style handwriting into text. In addition, a number of third-party soft keyboards are available for these devices. Also, touch screen devices come with Word Completion, a feature that displays a list of possible words based on the first few letters you enter so that you can tap on the desired word to finish entering it. Finally, many phone-enabled touch screen devices now include QWERTY keyboards, either

on the face of the device or on a panel that slides out from the back.

#### CONS

- Somewhat larger devices: While touch screen devices pack more power and versatility, they tend to be larger and heavier than non-touch screen smartphones. This is especially true of the Pocket PC/Windows Mobile PDA.
- Less battery life: The extra features and the touch screen itself require more power, which adversely affects the battery life. To help offset this, some touch screen devices have higher-capacity batteries. However, you'll generally have more time between recharges on a non-touch screen smartphone.
- More expensive: Since touch screen devices have bigger screens and better hardware than non-touch screen smartphones, they generally have a higher price tag. This is somewhat mitigated in the case of phone-enabled devices sold through wireless carriers.

#### >> Non-touch screen devices (referred to as smartphones, WM 6 Standards)

#### PROS

- Smaller and easier to carry around: Non-touch screen smartphones are noticeably smaller and lighter than Windows Mobile PDAs and even a little smaller than the phone-enabled touch screen devices.
- PDA functionality: Although not as feature-rich as touch screen devices, all non-touch screen smartphones have considerable PDA functionality, including messaging, Web surfing, contacts and calendar management, and much more. They offer a lot more than traditional mobile phones.
- Ease of use: Smartphones are designed primarily as mobile phones. Their built-in programs are simpler versions of those found on PDAs and are designed for quick access and use. They are also designed for one-handed operation.
- Less expensive: Non-touch screen smartphones tend to be more moderately priced than touch screen devices.

#### CONS

- Small screens harder to read: WM PDAs have 3.5 to 4-inch (diagonal) screens, and most phone-enabled touch screen devices have 2.8-inch screens. Non-touch screen smartphones have 2.4-inch or smaller screens. If you have reasonably good eyes, this may not be an issue.

## TERMINOLOGY

Microsoft recently changed its terminology and eliminated the term Pocket PC. Consequently, you will see many terms used throughout this magazine.

### NEW NAMES FOR WINDOWS MOBILE DEVICES

	Former device name	New Microsoft device name	ver. of WM 6 used
Non-Touch Screen	Smartphone	Windows Mobile powered smartphone	Windows Mobile 6 Standard
Touch Screen	Pocket PC Phone Edition	Windows Mobile powered smartphone	Windows Mobile 6 Professional
Touch Screen	Pocket PC (without phone)	Windows Mobile powered PDA	Windows Mobile 6 Classic

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- Simplified (or missing) Office Mobile suite: Most non-touch screen smartphones running Windows Mobile 6 Standard include “Mobile” versions of Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. However, these applications have fewer features than those found on touch screen devices. Smartphones running previous versions of the OS/software suite do not have these applications.
- Input and control via keypad and buttons: All input and control of a non-touch screen device is accomplished via the numeric (or QWERTY) keypad and a few additional hardware buttons. Since the

devices tend to be smaller, so are the buttons. This can be a disadvantage for some users.

- Limited text input: Since input on smartphones is restricted to the external keys, entering text is more difficult. Fortunately, many of the more recently introduced devices come with small QWERTY keyboards that, with a little practice, allow you to type e-mails and text messages at a decent clip. If you know you will be doing a lot of e-mailing and text messaging, stay away from devices that only have numeric (T9) keypads. Entering a lot of text with these can be difficult. ■

## ***Wireless Carriers, Service Contracts, and Unlocked Phones***

To use the phone capabilities of the Smartphone Professional or Smartphone Standard devices, you must have a service contract with a wireless carrier. In the U.S., these include Sprint, Verizon, T-Mobile, AT&T, and others. These carriers have wireless networks that use one of two wireless technologies:

- CDMA: Sprint and Verizon
- GSM/GPRS: AT&T and T-Mobile

The phones they sell are designed to work with their network’s wireless technology. Here are some things to keep in mind:

1. If you buy a phone for a CDMA network and switch to a GSM/GPRS network, you will not be able to use the CDMA phone on it. The same is true for GSM/GPRS phone if you switch to a CDMA network.
2. Unlocked GSM/GPRS phones can be used on any GSM/GPRS network. These unlocked phones are purchased through companies like [expansys-usa.com](http://expansys-usa.com) and [simoncells.com](http://simoncells.com). So, for example, if you had a service contract with AT&T but didn’t like the phone

they sold you, you could purchase an unlocked device and simply move the SIM card from the AT&T phone to your new, unlocked phone. Note that unlocked phones sold by third parties tend to be more expensive because their cost is not subsidized by a service contract.

3. It’s also possible to purchase an activated SIM card, which you can then insert into any unlocked GSM/GPRS phone.
4. It is sometimes possible to opt out of a service contract with one provider (you may have to pay a penalty) and keep the phone. In that case, it may be possible to use the phone on another network using similar wireless technology.

- a. In the case of locked GSM/GPRS phones, you may be able to find third-party software to unlock it. Then you would be able to use the SIM card from another GSM/GPRS network.

- b. If you opt out of a contract with a CDMA network provider, you might be able to get another CDMA network provider to activate the CDMA phone you have.